

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY RABAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 100801

FOR JAMES J. BLAKE

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SECSTATE WASHDC INFO TUNIS FROM TRIPOLI
MAY 21 REPEATED

QUOTE

TRIPOLI 0674

FOR NEWSOM FROM JOSIF

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR LY

SUBJECT: ADMINISTRATION OF EMBASSY

REF: STATE 095397

1. WE WARMLY APPRECIATE YOUR MESSAGE UNDER REFERENCE,
WHICH HAS BEEN CIRCULATED TO ALL OF THE " FROZEN FEW".

2. IN VIEW OF AGREED OBJECTIVE OF KEEPING MISSION HERE,
WILL TRY TO AVOID CONFRONTATIONS THAT COULD SERVE AS
PRETEXT TO CLOSE EMBASSY. BELIEVE THIS CAN BE DONE
WITHOUT COMPROMISING OUR PRINCIPLES , AT LEAST IN THE
MATTER OF STATING THEM TO LARG.

3. AFTER LAPSE OF A WEEK I HAVE AGAIN RENEWED MY
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REQUEST TO SEE AN RCC MEMBER OR ACTING FONMIN OBEIDI.
(SEEMED BE NO POINT IN PRESSING WHILE HE ENGAGED IN
RECENT YOUTH CONFERENCE HERE.) PLAN TO AVOID DISCUSSING
OUR LIST OF PROBLEMS AS SUCH BUT TO ENGAGE HIM IN
REVIEW OF US/ LIBYAN RELATONS SINCE 1940' S,
POINTING OUT FRIENDSHIP WE HAVE SHOWN LIBYAN
PEOPLE AND CORRECTNESS OUR ATTITUDE TO REVOLUTIONARY
REGIME, CONTRASTING ALL THIS WITH LARG RECORD OF
INCREASING HOSTILITY AND RECENT CHIP ON SHOULDER
POSTURE IN PUBLIC. (BASIC REASON FOR IT IS
OF COURSE QADHAFI' S FRUSTRATION, NOT SO MUCH WITH
US AS WITH OTHER ARABS.) WOULD THEN ASK FOR
ENLIGHTENMENT FROM OBEIDI ON REASONS FOR THIS
CONTRAST OF BEHAVIOR AND REPLY BRIEFLY TO HIS
POINTS. (IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO KNOW WHICH HE
WILL RAISE. I RECALL THAT HE VOLUNTEERED TO ME ONCE,
IN FEBRUARY, THAT OUR RETALIATION RE PASSPORTS WAS
" NOT UNREASONABLE". REST OF CONVERSATION WAS REPORTED
BY TRIPOLI 0194. HE IS BY ALL ACCOUNTS A WELL-
INTENTIONED AND REASONABLE MAN, BUT POWERLESS, AND
I SEE NO POINT IN MAKING HOPELESS DEMARCHES ON
MOST OF OUR SPECIFIC COMPLAINTS AT THIS STAGE. KIKHYA
WAS A STRONGER MAN, YET HE BATTED ZERO ON MY LONG
LIST OF REQUESTS TO HIM OF FEBRUARY 28.)

4. IT SEEMS TO ME THIS TALK, IF IT MATERIALIZES
AS I EXPECT, COULD LEAD NATURALLY TO A DROP OF A HINT
THAT OF COURSE USG WOULD WELCOME AN EXCHANGE OF
VIEWS AT A HIGH LEVEL. BELIEVE IT WOULD BE BEST TO
INDICATE IT COULD BE BY A VISIT EITHER HERE OR TO
WASHINGTON, " SOMETIME". AM QUITE SURE THAT OBEIDI
WOULD CLAIM VISIT HERE COULD BE ARRANGED DESPITE
VISA PROBLEM, PERHAPS ON " AN EXCEPTIONAL BASIS";
PROBABLY HE COULD DELIVER TOO, ON THAT BASIS. BELIEVE
THERE NO CHANCE HE WOULD LEAP AT HINT OF AN RCC MEMBER' S
VISIT TO STATES, FOR THAT WOULD HAVE TO BE CLEARED.

5. FRANKLY, WOULD MUCH PREFER A GAMBIT SUCH AS THIS
TO GETTING THE TUNISIANS OR ALMOST ANYONE ELSE IN
THE MIDDLE OF WHAT SHOULD BE A US/ LIBYAN DIALOGUE.
AM SUSPICIOUS OF MASMOUDI IN PARTICULAR, AND DOUBT
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HE WOULD REPORT ACCURATELY TO EITHER SIDE. AS AN
INTERLOCUTOR FOR US, HE ALSO APPEARS TOO CLOSE TO
QADHAFI FOR MY TASTES.

6. HOWEVER LUGUBRIOUS THE PRESENT STATE OF US/ LIBYAN
RELATIONS BY NORMAL DIPLOMATIC STANDARDS, A BRISK
DIALOGUE IS GOING ON BY OTHER MEANS (MY LETTER TO

BLAKE OF APRIL 18). GIVEN THE EXTENT OF OUR INTERESTS HERE, THIS NOT SURPRISING AND IS BOUND TO CONTINUE WHETHER OR NOT UNION WITH EGYPT IS CONSUMMATED. I THEREFORE BELIEVE WE SHOULD TRY TO KEEP A PRESENCE HERE NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS SEPTEMBER 1, AND THAT IN FACT IT SHOULD NOT BE A SIGNIFICANTLY SMALLER PRESENCE THAN WE ARE PRESENTLY AUTHORIZED, BOTH BY THE LIBYANS AND THE DEPT. IN OTHER WORDS, GIVEN THE TIME LAG ON PERSONNEL ASSIGNMENTS, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD BE PLANNING NOW TO MAKE NORMAL PERSONNEL REPLACEMENTS FALLING DUE " BY THE END OF SEPTEMBER" AND BEYOND.

7. WOULD BE HAPPY TO DISCUSS BROAD QUESTIONS RE STAFFING OF A PROSPECTIVE CONGEN OR BRANCH OF THE U. S. INTERESTS SECTION AT CAIRO. MEANWHILE, WOULD POINT OUT THERE MAY BE SOME DANGER OF SIMPLY BACKING INTO A FAIT ACCOMPLI:

A. STATE 094801 OFFERS AN INGENIOUS SOLUTION TO WHAT SHOULD BE A MINOR PROBLEM (GETTING A SECURITY CLEARANCE FOR A PART TIME WORKING WIFE) BY ABOLISHING A POSITION THAT IS VITAL TO FILL ASAP WHATEVER OUR FUTURE STATUS HERE (I. E. , REGULAR POLITICAL OFFICER AND ARABIST). WOULD PREFER TO KEEP THAT POSITION, AND SEE THE DEPT START RECRUITING FOR IT NOW. AS FOR THE WORKING WIFE, I WILL CONTINUE HER ON IN VIEW OF FACT 1) SHE IS NEEDED PART TIME, 2) IS HIGHLY QUALIFIED, IN FACT A FORMER SECRETARY OF AMB HARRIMAN AT MOSCOW, AND 3) IS ALSO " CLEARED" AS MUCH AS ANY OF OUR WIVES, WHICH IS TO SAY AS MUCH AS HER HUSBAND. IT WOULD BE IRRESPONSIBLE FOR ME, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, TO SIDELINE HER FOR LACK OF A SECURITY CLEARANCE, WHICH SURELY THE DEPT CAN ARRANGE IF SHE QUALIFIES.

B. ON THE ASSUMPTION OBEIDI WILL NOT BE ABLE TO OFFER REASONABLE
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HOPE FOR HIS REENTRY SOON, I HEREBY RELEASE COUNTRYMAN PROVIDED THE DEPT DOES NOT ABOLISH HIS POSITION TOO (EVEN WITH A PROMISE IT WILL BE REESTABLISHED WHEN IT CAN BE FILLED, A LA MARTHINSEN' S). BASIC REASON FOR MY DECISION IS THAT A FURTHER DELAY IN REUNITING COUNTRYMAN AND HIS EFFECTS WOULD BE UNFAIR TO HIM. RECOMMEND HE BE ASSIGNED TO TUNIS TEMPORARILY.

C. WITH REGARD TO BOTH THESE OFFICERS' POSITIONS I ASSUME YOU AGREE THAT NEA NOW HAS A PROSPECTIVE INTEREST -- ON BASIS OF THE PROBABLE TRANSFER OF LIBYAN REGION TO A SUBORDINTE STATUS UNDER CAIRO,
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